

## Rebranding:

# Connecting with Your Audience to Remain Relevant

Advantage Communications, Inc.

Samsung, Apple, Motorola, LG, HTC... These are some of the most successful brands in the smartphone industry. With the launch of the smartphone market, consumers' expectations skyrocketed. Having what amounted to a hand-held computer became a social norm. As time passed, we saw many computer companies become phone companies and vice versa. How did they weather the market successfully?

### REBRANDING

Rebranding is the most effective way of staying in tune with your customer base in today's evolving market. Investing in rebranding allows companies and institutions to stay relevant. This process has become an essential step in the evolution of numerous established companies and organizations.

“Your brand strategy and identity should be in tune with your company goals and objectives.”

Though it has touched various industries, many are not aware that there are certain precautions to take when tampering with the identity of one's brand.

At Advantage Communications, Inc., we recognize how important it is to adapt to an ever-changing market. We have been privileged to successfully help clients like General Motors, Verizon, and Stamp Out Smoking in their rebranding efforts. Every brand should focus on their customer and the value they create for their customers. In today's society, customers have more information than ever before. Marketers, advertisers, and public relations specialists have to be smarter than ever to keep up with the most highly educated consumers in the world.

## **WHY ARE YOU REBRANDING?**

The process of rebranding must start with the perception or image the company is trying to project in the marketplace. One must thoroughly examine why you are rebranding. There may be a shift in the target market's perception of the brand or the company may try to expand into a new market. In today's ever-changing market, a company may need to revamp their image in keeping with a continuously evolving generation or to appeal to an international audience. Some companies rebrand to combat the effects of a bad reputation and negative public opinion. For example, many department stores are also facing a need to rebrand. A well-known department store will soon close over three-dozen stores and cut 2,000 jobs. Prolonged financial issues are a sign that a company should make some drastic changes in how they communicate to customers what their value proposition truly is.

## **WHAT ARE YOUR BRAND VALUES?**

In order to make a significant change, the company must look at the brand's attributes and values, both positive and negative. What is the perception of the brand? What does your company do well? What could your company improve? Are you known for being a trendy, new, cutting-edge start-up, or a trustworthy, dependable, family-oriented mom-and-pop? Understanding who you are as a company or business helps you decide where you want to go.

In my estimation, the well-known department store failed to connect with their customers on this level. In an attempt to reimage themselves as a high-end department store, they alienated those customers who frequent their establishment. Their customers valued great deals and quality products at a mid-range price. This disconnect in meeting customer needs could have been easily addressed. We at Advantage Communications, Inc. encourage objective research that analyzes all publics and their relationships to your brand. We identify your loyal customers and what aspects of your brand they like. Our team then focuses on building a strong brand around your core competencies. This is a branding fight for life, and one that must be approached strategically.

## **CUSTOMER BENEFITS?**

Advantage Communications, Inc. also looks at the benefits to the customer. A good brand is only as good as the value it brings to its consumers. We do not recommend diluting your message to appeal to a broader audience which is a common impulse decision. Instead, we assist in appealing to an audience that can appreciate and benefit from your product. Having a small, yet fiercely loyal customer-base is always preferred. Thus, altering your brand image should be about deepening the relationships you have established and appealing to new customers simultaneously. Maintaining contact with your publics is imperative. Rebranding helps define who you are as a company and allows your customer base to fully understand why they associate with your brand.

## **NOW, TO REINVENT**

At Advantage Communications, Inc., our goal is to reinvent your brand to align it with your envisioned objective. Reinventing a brand affects all aspects of your business and every change should be made with care. Your brand strategy and identity should be in tune with your company goals and objectives. Marketers should strive to target past and new customers. It should also better position your company in the market to compete and land a fresh approach to communicating your company's history, values, and future. Major color and key element changes are ill-advised. Your company's history is a part of your company's future, and you don't want to alienate those that love your brand for what it is. Implementation of your rebranding efforts should be consistent, reaching and influencing every department. All publics should be alerted in a relevant form of communication. Staff should be made aware ahead of media, and PR should be working overtime to field any misconceptions, confusion, or backlash. One of our current projects highlights our thinking on rebranding.

We redesigned and reintroduced *Inform*, General Motor's newsletter emphasizing the achievements of and information pertaining to their minority dealer community. The goal of this rebranding initiative was to tailor the overall platform to remain relevant following

the automobile bailout. We kept the overall message in line with the brand values GM wanted to communicate to its dealers: excellence, success, and patriotism. As a result, *Inform* won an APEX award in 2013.

In conclusion, all companies should strive for consumer relevancy. Outdated and irrelevant business models hurt your business growth. If your brand is disconnected, you limit your opportunities. Successfully rebranding to appeal to your market promotes growth. Brands should evaluate themselves annually to maintain their connection with their customers and constantly strive for relevancy.

Relevancy translates to customer loyalty, and loyal customers create revenue.

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